



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 1999

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SERVICE CHIEFS:

ABILITY TO EXECUTE NATIONAL MILITARY STRATEGY REMAINS

“HIGH-RISK”

According to the nation’s military leaders, U.S. armed forces still face “high risk” in being able to execute the missions required under the National Military Strategy.

Over the past year, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have reviewed the ability of the services to execute the missions called for under the National Military Strategy, and have assessed the risk to be “high.” Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee on February 24, 1999, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Ralph Eberhart concluded that not even the \$84 billion in new defense spending proposed in the Administration’s long-range defense program would reduce these high levels of risk. General Eberhart stated, “Looking across the FYDP [future years defense plan], I see nothing that would cause us to change the risk at this point.”

The National Military Strategy calls for the U.S. military to be able to fight and win two nearly simultaneous major theater wars (MTWs). According to Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jay Johnson, “If you asked for our ability to service two MTWs and how this budget meets that, I would still have to characterize it – and the second MTW in particular – as high risk.”

Chairman Spence noted that even the President’s proposed \$84 billion defense spending increase over the next six years was being held hostage to domestic politics. Spence cited the threat in the President’s budget that “if Social Security Reform is not enacted, discretionary spending levels [for defense] would be reduced to those assumed in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997,” and asked the military service chiefs what kind of risks the military would face if this threat were carried out.

Without significant increases in defense spending, responded Army Chief of Staff General Dennis Reimer, the Army would be left “with two very clear choices: you either hollow out the force or you are unable to execute the National Military Strategy. I don’t see any other way you can do it.” According to General Eberhart, “I don’t know how you go from ‘high’ to ‘higher,’ but in terms of the second MTW, that’s where we’d have to stay. If this money does not come to be, I think we’re talking about [risks to] other things than just MTWs. I think we’re talking about risks associated with smaller-scale contingencies and in other operations...”

According to Marine Corps Commandant General Charles Krulak, “In terms of risk to the [ability to execute] the National Military Strategy, I think we’ve gone too far; I think we’re there now. If we don’t do something about this, we’re going to be back into the hollow armed forces and this nation can’t have that, can’t take that, because the world is changing so rapidly, is so dangerous, that we need to stop this now.”

Chairman Spence noted that the discussion about risk in executing the National Military Strategy is central to understanding the implications of the problems and funding shortfalls facing the military. “In laymen’s terms, [higher risk] means increased American casualties and a reduced ability to respond rapidly in a time of crisis or war, Spence said.

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